

VZCZCXRO0478
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHFN #0006 0061344
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 061344Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2391
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS FREETOWN 000006

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC AMGT CASC SL

SUBJECT: FREETOWN: EAC MEETS TO DISCUSS RAMIFICATIONS OF CONTE'S DEATH

¶1. (SBU) EAC Freetown was convened on December 23 to discuss the possible ramifications of Guinean President Conte's death to security in Sierra Leone. Though Conakry is reported to be calm, EAC is concerned about potentially rapid deteriorations to the situation that may result in spillover effects in Sierra Leone (e.g., refugees). Further, as the evacuation point for Embassy Conakry, EAC must confirm/prepare transportation routes and provisions for any influx of American citizens. Chaired by DCM, participants were COM, RSO, LEGATT, A/MGT, A/DATT, CONS, and USAID (Note: The new CLO awaits final security clearance. End note.).

¶2. (SBU) RSO stated that he would meet with police contacts to discuss border security. A check was conducted with Embassy Conakry Post One, confirming positive radio contact. The embassy boat, part of the evacuation strategy, will be fueled and ready for service. Due to limited passenger capacity (12), shuttles would be required. The locally-engaged boat captain's holiday leave has been suspended until further notice.

¶3. (SBU) CONS reported that there are 788 registered American citizens in Sierra Leone, all of whom will receive a warden message informing them of the situation and requesting that any concerns be reported to the embassy. There are approximately 4,032 evacuees in Sierra Leone, and 6,591 in Guinea. The Guinean estimate includes 96 mission staff. CONS is aware of 23 Peace Corps volunteers from Guinea traveling in Sierra Leone over the holidays, and has contact information with which to reach them

¶4. (SBU) A/MGT identified that 720 MREs are readily available, and 140 large bottles of water. Blankets are in shorter supply, and more will be acquired should Freetown be called upon to house evacuees from the Conakry mission. Checks on fuel and water for the residences will be conducted on December 23, in preparation for the upcoming days of official leave. A/MGT will review all country clearance requests to determine if visits can be supported under current or worsening circumstances.

¶5. (SBU) The USAID representative visiting from Conakry will remain in Freetown until further notice.

¶6. (SBU) The EAC agreed to continue to closely monitor the situation, maintaining contact with Embassy Conakry and preparedness in case of evacuation or threats to Sierra Leone's internal security. The EAC will meet again in the coming days, as necessary.

PERRY